



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes World TB Day

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is commemorating World TB Day on March 24th, the date in 1882 on which Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacteria that causes tuberculosis (TB). To this day, TB remains a leading cause of illness and death worldwide. World TB Day provides an opportunity to raise awareness about TB-related problems and solutions, and to support worldwide TB control efforts.

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease caused the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. TB most commonly affects the lungs but also can involve almost any organ of the body. Many years ago, this disease was referred to as "consumption" because without effective treatment, patients often wasted away. Today, tuberculosis usually can be treated successfully with antibiotics.

North Dakota's 2012-13 TB outbreak in Grand Forks serves as a reminder that this disease remains a serious public health threat. More recently, the NDDoH investigated a case of bovine tuberculosis (*Mycobacteria bovis*) in a foreign-born farm worker, which resulted in the positive identification of tuberculosis in several cows with which the worker had contact. These cases highlight the need for North Dakotans, including farmers and ranchers, to be better informed about tuberculosis in order to make informed decisions regarding not only their health, but also any potential impact on their livelihood.

Typically, North Dakota reports low numbers of TB cases and has historically ranked as having one of the lowest rates of tuberculosis nation-wide. However, the outbreak moved North Dakota from 44th in the nation in 2011 to 7th in the nation in 2012 in the overall rate of disease.

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A crucial part of controlling TB is working cooperatively with private and public healthcare providers in our state. “It is important that we continue to provide support to ensure healthcare providers have the right information and access to reliable diagnostics,” said Dee Pritschet, TB Controller for the North Dakota Department of Health. “It is equally important that local health departments have the resources needed to properly treat people with tuberculosis,” added Pritschet.

Although TB cases and rates decreased among foreign-born and U.S.-born persons in 2012, foreign-born persons and U.S.-born racial/ethnic minorities continue to be affected disproportionately by the disease.

Progress toward TB elimination in the United States will require ongoing surveillance and improved TB control and prevention activities. Everyone has a role to play in the elimination of TB. The North Dakota Department of Health, along with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), is committed to creating a world free of TB.

For information about tuberculosis, call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180 or visit the TB program website at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/tb.

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